

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4280
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CINCPAC HONOLULU
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CANBERRA 7379

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: MILI, MARR, PEPR, AS
SUBJECT: DESMOND BALL ON THE US-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONSHIP

1. SUMMARY: DESMOND BALL, SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW AT ANU'S STRATEGIC AND DEFENCE STUDIES CENTER, IS ABOUT TO PUBLISH AN ARTICLE ENTITLED "AMERICAN BASES: SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR AUSTRALIA'S SECURITY" WHICH PROMISES TO REVIVE THE RECENTLY-DORMANT ISSUE OF THE US-AUSTRALIAN DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP. THE ARTICLE IS, INsofar AS WE CAN TELL, BASED UPON SOURCES ALREADY PUBLIC, BUT "PULLS IT ALL TOGETHER" IN AN ATTEMPT TO ASK WHETHER AUSTRALIA REALLY BENEFITS SUFFICIENTLY FROM ITS ALLIANCE WITH THE US THAT IT WOULDN'T BE BETTER OFF FOREGOING THE SECURITY RELATIONSHIP AND SHARED INTELLIGENCE, AND LOSING WHAT BALL MAINTAINS IS A PRIME NUCLEAR TARGET STATUS IN THE EVENT OF CONFLICT BETWEEN THE SUPERPOWERS. END SUMMARY

2. DESMOND BALL, SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY'S "STRATEGIC AND DEFENCE STUDIES CENTER", IS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S TWO OR THREE MOST HIGHLY-CONFIDENTIAL

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REGARDED STRATEGIC AND DEFENSE ANALYSTS. HE IS A PROLIFIC WRITER, AN EXCELLENT AND METHODOICAL RESEARCHER, AND HAS BOTH STUDIED AND WRITTEN IN THE UNITED STATES AS WELL AS AUSTRALIA AND THE UK. WE WOULD DESCRIBE HIM AS A "RADICAL NATIONALIST" IN PREFERENCE TO OTHER, MORE WIDELY-USED AND MORE PEJORATIVE TEMS WHICH WE DO NOT BELIEVE FIT THE CASE AT HAND. LIKEWISE, WE WOULD HES TO DESCRIBE HIM AS

"ANTI-AMERICAN", ALTHOUGH SOME HAVE DONE SO, MERELY BECAUSE HIS HERETICAL POSITIONS CHALLENGE COMFORTABLE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE US-AUSTRALIAN ALLIANCE.

3. IN AS FEW WORDS AS POSSIBLE, BALL'S ARTICLE, WHICH IS TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE FORTHCOMING ISSUE OF "CURRENT AFFAIRS BULLETIN" (A QUARTERLY COMPENDIUM OF ARTICLES ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS PUT OUT BY THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY) MAINTAINS THAT "THE SO-CALLED JOINT FACILITIES" IN AUSTRALIA AREN'T "JOINT" IN THAT THE US IS ALLOWED TO DO PRETTY MUCH WHAT IT PLEASES AT THEM; WHAT THE US PLEASES IS SOMETIMES KEPT FROM AUSTRALIAN POLICY-MAKERS; THE LATTER, IN ANY EVENT, HAVE FAILED TO APPRECIATE THAT INCREMENTAL TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES CAN CONVERT PASSIVE COLLECTION FACILITIES INTO ACTIVE STRATEGIC SYSTEMS WITH "OFFENSIVE"(VICE "DEFENSIVE") CAPABILITIES; THIS OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY MAKES AUSTRALIA A STRATIGIC TARGET, A POINT MADE BY SUCCESSIVE AMERICAN POLICY-MAKERS FROM SECRETARY SCHLESINGER DOWN THROUGH THE RANKS OF GENERALS AND ADMIRALS; AUSTRALIA NO DOUBT GETS A GREAT DEAL OF INTELLIGENCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL SPIN-OFF FROM THEM, BUT COULD FOREGO MUCH OF THIS AT NO DETRIMENT TO ITS OWN DEFENSE, AND IF IT DIDN'T HAVE THE CRUTCH OF THE AMERICANS, MIGHT HAVE TO TAKE A MORE SERIOUS LOOK AT ITS OWN DEFENSE WEAKNESSES.

4. FROM A US STANDPOINT, THE ARTICLE (WHICH IS IN MAY
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RESPECTS QUITE A GOOD ONE) CAN ONLY BE DAMAGING IN THAT IT WILL NOT FAIL RPT WILL NOT FAIL TO RE-AROUNSE THE GENERAL PUBLIC CONTROVERSY OVER THE JOINT FACILITIES. WHILE THERE ARE A FEW APPARENT FACTUAL ERRORS OR SUBJECTIVE JUDGMENTS WHICH CAN BE CHALLENGED, THE BURDEN OF DEFENSE OF THE AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN ALLIANCE WILL FALL TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT THE SPIN-OFFS IN AUSTRALIA'S SIDE OUTWEIGHT THE POSSIBLE DETRIMENT TO AUSTRALIA'S POSITION. IN THAT SENSE, IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE THE LINE-UP A DEBATE PROCEEDS.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: WHILE WE WILL BE REPORTING THE REACTION TO THIS ARTICLE IN SOME DETAIL (MAINLY BECAUSE THE PAUCITY OF SERIOUS AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC REFLECTION ABOUT THE US-AUSTRALIAN SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WILL GUARANTEE THIS ONE THE HEADLINES), WE WOULD CAUTION READERS ABOUT BELIEVING THAT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CANBERRA 7379

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

JUST BECAUSE THERE'S A LOT OF SMOKE, THERE'S GOING TO
BE A LOT OF FIRE. THERE MAY JUST ONLY BE A LOT OF SMOKE.
IF THERE ARE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS THAT REQUIRE ANSWERING
WE WILL SEEK GUIDANCE. UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO THE CONTRARY,
OUR BASIC POSITION WILL BE TO SIMPLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT
SERIOUS AND INTELLIGENT MEN CAN STUDY THE SAME EVIDENCE
AND REACH DIFFERING CONCLUSIONS; THAT WE BELIEVE THE
WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS
BEHAVED IN A FORTHRIGHT AND CANDID MANNER RATHER THAN A
DISHONORABLE ONE; AND RECOMMEND THAT THOSE WHO QUESTION
THE VALUE OF THE ALLIANCE SEEK THE VIEWS OF THEIR OWN
GOVERNMENT AND THEIR FELLOW CITIZENS-- THAT THERE IS NO
DOUBT IN OUR MINDS THAT THE ALLIANCE SERVES PURPOSES WHICH
ARE SHARED BY BOTH OUR GOVERNMENTS AND BOTH OUR
COUNTRIES. IN THIS CONTEXT, RECENT STATEMENTS (WITHIN THE
LAST SEVERAL MONTHS) BY SECRETARY VANCE, VICE PRESIDENT
MONDALE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE, SECRETARY HAROLD
BROWN, AND OTHERS GIVE AMPLE SUPPORT TO THE OFFICIAL VIEW
OF THE US GOVERNMENT. WITH RESPECT TO CHARGES ABOUT
INDIVISUAL FACILITIES, WE PLAN TO NOTE THAT THE AGREEMENTS
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COVERING THE FACILITIES ARE PUBLIC DOCUMENTS, AND REFER
SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO ADOD. WE HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO INSURE
THAT THE SENIOR-MOST POLICY LEVELS IN BOTH ADOD AND DFA HAVE
COPIES OF THE ARTICLE AND ARE CONSIDERING WHAT THEIR RESPONSE
SHOULD BE. IN GENEOUR EFFORT WILL BE TO NOT
BECOME INVOLVED IN WHAT SHOULD PROPERLY BE AN INTRA-MURAL

DEBATE IN AUSTRALIA, BUT RETAIN THE FREEDOM TO GENTLY (OR FIRMLY, IF REQUIRED) CORRECT THE RECORD IF ALLEGATIONS AGAINST US START TO GET OUT OF HAND. WE BELIEVE THIS CAN BE DONE WITH DISCIPLINE AND PROPORTION, AND THAT A STRICT "NO COMMENT" STANCE WOULD BE HARMFUL TO OUR PURPOSES AND INTERESTS. WE BELIEVE WE CAN MAINTAIN A SUCCESSFUL LOW PROFILE AND DEFEND OUR OVERALL INTERESTS IF WE HAVE THE FREEDOM TO SPEAK UP FROM TIME TO TIME JUST TO MAKE SURE NO ONE GETS AWAY WITH ANYTHING TOO OUTRAGEOUS. WE WOULD, HOWEVER, BE GRATEFUL FOR DEPT'S COMMENTS ON PROPOSED HANDLING, AND WOULD, OF COURSE, BE GUIDED BY DEPT'S VIEWS.

6. DON'T KNOW WHEN THE ARTICLE WILL BE PUBLISHED; WE ARE POUCHING THE FULL TEXT IN TOMORROW'S UNCLASSIFIED BAG TO EA/ANZ; BELIEVE IT SHOULD REACH WASHINGTON BEFORE PUBLICATION (ENTIRE ARTICLE IS 28 DOUBLE-SPACED LEGAL-SIZED PAGES.)
ALSTON

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